

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-09

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T:CEMAW

PM:STERN (DRAFT)

NEA:ALATHERTON

----- 064662

R 262047Z FEB 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCEUR

S E C R E T STATE 043531

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, TS

SUBJECT:TUNISIAN REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE

REFS : (A) TUNIS 0046 (NOTAL); (B) TUNIS 0047 (NOTAL);

(C) TUNIS 0339 (NOTAL); (D) STATE 012748 (NOTAL);

(E) UNCINCEUR DTG 312149Z JAN 75 (F) TUNIS 847

FROM THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS

1. REVIEW BY DEPARTMENT AND DOD OF GOT PLANS FOR MODERNIZ-
ING ITS MILITARY FORCES RAISES A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS

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REGARDING OUR POLICY TOWARD TUNISIA AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

IN RELATION TO GOT'S ASPIRATIONS. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS THESE ISSUES WITH DEFENSE MINISTER KHEFACHA AND OTHER CONCERNED TUNISIAN OFFICIALS IN ORDER TO CLARIFY THE LIMITATIONS ON THE CAPACITY OF THE USG TO BE HELPFUL AND TO STIMULATE TUNISIAN THINKING ABOUT HARD CHOICES WHICH GOT MUST ITSELF MAKE. WHILE WISHING TO DEMONSTRATE OUR WILLINGNESS TO BE RESPONSIVE TO TUNISIA'S SECURITY NEEDS, WE DO NOT WISH TO GIVE GOT FALSE SIGNAL OF EXPANSIVE FLEXIBILITY OF U.S. RESOURCES. BUILDING ON THE FRANK DIALOGUE WHICH

YOU HAVE ALREADY ESTABLISHED WITH HIGH TUNISIAN OFFICIALS, YOU MAY MAKE FOLLOWING POINTS AS REPRESENTING WASHINGTON'S VIEWS.

2. ACCESS TO U.S. ARMS: USG IS PREPARED TO GIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM TUNISIA FOR THE PURCHASE, ON A CASH BASIS, OF THE TYPES OF ARMS OUTLINED IN REF (B), WITH SOME POSSIBLE MINOR EXCEPTIONS PURSUANT TO WORLDWIDE ARMS POLICY. USG WOULD NOT TAKE SAME ATTITUDE TOWARD MANY COUNTRIES, INCLUDING TUNISIA'S IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS, BUT WE RECOGNIZE DEFENSIVE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND MILITARY MODERNIZATION WHICH TUNISIA IS CONSIDERING. IN THIS SPIRIT, USG IS PREPARING LETTERS OF OFFER FOR 12 A-4M'S AND 12 F-5E'S ON A CASH BASIS.

3. AVAILABILITY: SOME OF THE ITEMS LISTED IN TUNIS 0047 ARE NOT U.S. MADE ITEMS AND EXACT U.S. EQUIVALENTS MAY NOT EXIST. OF THE U.S.-ORIGIN ITEMS, MANY ARE CURRENTLY IN SHORT SUPPLY. LEAD TIMES FOR SOME ITEMS, ESPECIALLY FOR CERTAIN ARMY EQUIPMENT (TANKS, APC'S, ETC.), ARE VERY LONG AND COSTS ARE LIKELY TO ESCALATE. THESE SHORTAGES AND PRODUCTION PROBLEMS ARE BEING BORNE BY U.S. FORCES AND PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT CAN ONLY BE GIVEN TO FOREIGN RECIPIENTS BASED ON UNUSUAL IMPORTANCE TO U.S. SECURITY. GOT MAY FIND THAT OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES CAN PROVIDE SHORTER DELIVERY TIMES FOR SOME ITEMS. WE ASSUME, HOWEVER, THAT MAGNITUDE OF TUNISIAN MODERNIZATION PROGRAM, CONSTRAINTS ON THE ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY OF TUNISIAN ARMED FORCES AND FUNDING LIMITATIONS WOULD, IN SECRET

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ANY EVENT, INDUCE THE GOT TO PLAN AN INCREMENTAL PROGRAM PHASED OVER SOME YEARS.

4. FINANCING: WE HOPE TO CONTINUE A GRANT TRAINING PROGRAM AT PROGRAMMED LEVEL OF 400,000 DOLLARS PER YEAR. GRANTS FOR MATERIEL ITEMS, HOWEVER, WILL END WITH THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR'S PROGRAM AS PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED. THIS IN NO WAY INDICATES A LESSENERED CONCERN BY USG IN

TUNISIAN SECURITY. FACT IS THAT TUNISIAN FINANCIAL POSITION IS SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO MAKE A CONTINUATION OF GRANT MATERIEL ASSISTANCE INDEFENSIBLE BEFORE CONGRESS AND THE U.S. PUBLIC. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HOPE TO INCREASE FMS CREDIT LEVELS FOR TUNISIA. FYI ONLY: SUBJECT TO PRESIDENT WAIVING 40 MILLION DOLLAR CEILING FOR AFRICA, WE MAY BE ABLE TO INCREASE RHE FMS ARTMENT WOULD THIS FISCAL YEAR TO 5 MILLION DOLLARS. DFMS CREDIT OULD HOPE TO DETERMINE A NEW PROGRAM LEVEL OF FMS CREDIT FOR TUNISIA FOR FUTURE YEARS BY EARLY APRIL. NOTIFICATION TO GOT OF THESE CHANGES WOULD TAKE PLACE AT A TIME WHICH WE JUDGE TO HAVE OPTIMAL POLITICAL IMPACT. END FYI. WHILE

THE LEVEL OF USG CREDITS COULD NOT APPROACH THE TOTAL REQUIREMENTS ENVISAGED BY THE GOT, EVEN IF PURCHASES WERE SPREAD OUT OVER MANY YEARS, FMS CREDITS COULD FACILITATE THE PURCHASE OF SOME PRIORITY ITEMS WHICH THE GOT DESIRES.

5. TUNISIAN PRIORITIES: WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT GOT HAS BEEN WRONG IN THE PAST TO DEVOTE THE GREAT BULK OF ITS RESOURCES TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. TUNISIA HAS ENJOYED FAR MORE POLITICAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS THAN MANY COUNTRIES WITH LARGER MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS. FURTHERMORE, TUNISIA'S MODERATE POLICIES HAVE EARNED HER MANY FRIENDS BOTH WITHIN THE ARAB WORLD AND IN THE WIDER INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, A FACTOR WHICH BY ITSELF ENHANCES TUNISIAN SECURITY. NONETHELESS, IF GOT NOW FEELS THAT THREATS TO ITS SECURITY HAVE INCREASED, IT WOULD BE UNDERSTANDABLE FOR GOT TO DEVOTE A LARGER SHARE OF ITS OWN GROWING RESOURCES TO DEFENSE. THIS WOULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT MEASURE OF HOW SERIOUS THE GOT REALLY IS ABOUT THE NEED TO REDRESS ITS MILITARY WEAKNESS.

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6. OTHER SOURCES OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: IF TUNISIA CAN MAKE A GOOD CASE THAT IT IS BEING THREATENED BY LIBYA, WE ASSUME THAT IT WOULD FIND RECEPTIVE EARS AMONG THE LEADERS OF WEALTHY AND CONSERVATIVE ARAB GOVERNMENTS AND, POSSIBLY, THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN.

7. PRIORITIES AMONG TUNISIAN NEEDS: THE GOT PLAN TO AUGMENT ITS DEFENSE CAPABILITY APPEARS TO BE A RATHER LOOSE AND HURRIEDLY ASSEMBLED DOCUMENT COVERING THE DESIRES OF ALL THREE BRANCHES OF THE TUNISIAN ARMED FORCES. IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO HAVE AN IDEA OF WHICH PURCHASES ASSUME THE GREATEST PRIORITY FOR THE GOT, AS WELL AS THE TIME FRAME THEY ENVISAGE FOR COMPLETING THE ACQUISITION OF VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN THE PACKAGE.

8. VISIT OF DEFENSE MINISTER: DEPARTMENT AND DOD WOULD AGREE TO HAVE PRELIMINARY AND EXPLORATORY DISCUSSIONS WITH KHEFACHA AND APPROPRIATE AIDES, PROVIDED THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WITH REASONABLE PRECISION: GOT PRIORITIES AND TIME FRAMES FOR EQUIPMENT PURCHASES, ANTICIPATED LEVEL OF GOT FUNDING AND PROSPECTS FOR FUNDING BY TUNISIA'S OTHER FRIENDS. USG WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS EQUIPMENT AVAILABILITIES AND COSTS OF ITEMS TUNISIA DESIRES TO BUY. WHILE USG WOULD ALSO BE PREPARED TO LISTEN TO KHEFACHA'S IDEAS OF WHAT CREDIT LEVELS GOT SEEKS FROM USG, HE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS LIMITED FLEXIBILITY IN ALLOCATING FMS CREDIT FUNDS AND THAT NO BINDING COMMITMENTS COULD BE MADE DURING HIS VISIT.

9. FYI: AN ASSESSMENT BY EMBASSY/USLOT OF QUESTIONS IN PARA 8 WILL BE HELPFUL. I NOTE FROM PARA 6 OF REFTEL F THAT YOU HAVE TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO DETERMINE GOT PRIORITIES. HOPEFULLY CURRENT ACTION BY USLOT WILL ASSIST TUNISIANS IN DEVELOPMENT OF A TRI-SERVICE MILITARY EQUIPMENT PRIORITY LIST WHICH WOULD SERVE AS A BASIS FOR FOCUSING LIMITED RESOURCES. THIS PRIORITY LIST COULD THEN BE GIVEN SERIOUS STUDY BY DOD AND DEPARTMENT AND PROVIDE FOUNDATION FOR SUBSEQUENT, SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH TUNISIANS. SUCH A LIST, COMBINED WITH EMBASSY/USLOT ASSESSMENT, WOULD BE NECESSARY PRIOR TO OUR AGREEMENT
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TO A VISIT TO WASHINGTON BY KHEFACHA. KISSINGER

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